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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Poland

SUBJECT Food Habits in Restaurants, Canteens, Clubs, Towns and Village Homes

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DATE DISTR. 5 APR 54

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SUPP. TO
REPORT NO.

1. "The following information on Polish restaurant facilities and food habits dates through Jan 54.
- End of Rationing
2. "As generally known, no article of food is at present rationed in Poland. In 1952 meat and cheese were still on coupons. They are free now.
- Panstwowa Rada Zywienia Zbiorowego
3. "All food-distributing enterprises, except the shops, are subordinated to PRZZ (Panstwowa Rada Zywienia Zbiorowego - the State Communal Food Council) which is a department of the Ministry for Home Trade.
4. "PRZZ has area branches (Wojewodzki Rady ZZ) which operate in two sections: open and closed. The open section (zywienie otwarte) governs all restaurants, bars, cafes, etc.; the closed section (zywienie zamkniête) governs all sorts of factory and other canteens, clubs, etc.
- Restaurants
5. "In the large towns the restaurants, bars etc., are an important factor in the life of the population: the majority of the working citizens try to eat once a day at a canteen or restaurant. The number of these still does not correspond to the needs of the consumers. No official figure is available for the whole of Poland but in Warsaw there were 220 'open' restaurants and bars on 1 Jan 54; together they could seat 13,000 persons at a time. If one reckons that during lunch time each seat is occupied about four times, it follows that 50,000 people can eat their lunch at restaurants in Warsaw.

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6. "The majority of the restaurants in Warsaw belong to the state-owned firm, Warszawskie Zaklady Gastronomiczne, the rest belong to the Consumers' Cooperative (Spoldzielnia Soczywcow). There are a few isolated private enterprises. small restaurants and bars serving good but expensive food. In Warsaw there are five or six such restaurants, in Gdynia two, in Poznan two. Although it cannot be proved, the inhabitants are convinced that the sleeping partner in such private enterprises is a high UP or police boss.

7. "Restaurants and bars fall into three categories, depending on furnishing, quality of food, etc. The prices and the bill of fare differ in each category. The common feature is that in the restaurants of all three categories at lunch time one can get an official 'prix fixe' meal of two courses costing from 8 to 12 zloty, depending on the category of the restaurant. This lunch or dinner (8-12 zl.) is called 'popular' and consists of soup and some chopped meat with potatoes or cabbage. The helpings are small; theoretically they must consist of 80 gr. of pork or 120 gr. of other meat. At lunch time (or dinner time as it is called in Poland) between two and five PM it is forbidden to sell spirits in restaurants of the 2nd and 3rd category. Nobody observes this rule.

8. "A better kind of 'prix fixe' dinner is called a 'club dinner' and costs 16 zl.

9. "Whoever wishes to eat à la carte must be prepared to pay at least 25 zl. for his dinner.

Typical prices

| | |
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| Hors d'oeuvres | 1.50-5 zl. |
| pickled herring | 1.5 zl. |
| a fish mayonnaise | 6 - 8 zl. |
| a pickled cucumber | 1.00 zl. |
| eggs with mayonnaise | 2.50 - 3.00 zl. |
| serving of butter | 90 groszy |
| a roll | 50 gr. |
| ½ bottle of beer | 2.20 zl. |

Meat dishes cost no less than 5 zl. in restaurants of the 1st category and no less than 7.5 zl. in restaurants of the 2nd. In restaurants of the 3rd category hot dishes are served at dinner (or lunch) time only; at other hours they serve only cold dishes and vodka. Slightly better dishes, such as fish (eel, salmon, mackerel, chicken, etc.) cost from 15-30 zl. Desserts are expensive:

| | |
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| trifle or pudding | 8-10 zl. |
| jam omelette | 8-10 zl. |
| a cup of coffee | 7 zl. |
| demi-tasse (pol szarne) | 3.50 zl. |
| ½ litre of plain vodka (at an ordinary restaurant) | 24-30 zl. |

10. "At a restaurant with a band all prices are raised 10 per cent; after midnight 50 per cent. It is prohibited to bring one's own vodka to a restaurant; people caught doing so pay a fine of 30 zl. Nevertheless it is often done.

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11. Institutional Canteens

"The canteens attached to factories and institutions are likewise subordinated to PRZZ. The PRZZ area and town committees collaborate with the local councils (Peanstwove Radzy).

12. "The majority of factories employing 100 workers or more have or try to have their own canteen. A good canteen is an important factor in the recruitment and retention of manpower.
13. "The factory canteens are managed by various organizations: consumer's cooperatives, the Gastronomic Union, etc., or by the management of the factory itself. These factory canteens are poorly managed. Workers everywhere are permanently dissatisfied with the quality and quantity of the food and the sanitary conditions.
14. "The factory canteens serve dinner only; they feed the workers once daily and serve no breakfasts or suppers. The dinner costs 5-7 zl. and consists of a soup and meat or fish with vegetables. Bread goes with the meal and does not cost extra. No canteen serves vodka or even beer. The helpings are too small for people doing heavy physical work. The plates and utensils are often dirty and not available in sufficient quantity.
15. "In deference to the constant complaints of workers, an experiment was made in 1953. The management of the canteens at certain enterprises was turned over to the Workers' Committee (Oddzialy Zapatrzenia Robotniczego - OZR). These committees have appointed special persons to buy food, have established factory dairy farms and have bought poultry, cows and pigs for the factories to overcome food shortage. This system is suitable for large factories and has been a success. At 46 large factories in Warsaw this system has now been introduced. At the Gdynia shipyards the OZR canteen employs 50 people and functions satisfactorily. At some enterprises the OZR committees have even established tailor and shoemaker shops where the clothes and shoes of the workers can be repaired.
16. "In principle only the workers of a given factory may eat at the canteen of that factory; actually there is no control of this rule. Every worker can obtain a so-called decade ticket or booklet with ten coupons for ten dinners; he pays for this on pay-day. There is nothing to prevent the worker from turning over his coupons to somebody else who may then eat at the factory canteen. The only restriction is that every worker can buy only one booklet of coupons; if he gives it away he must go without canteen food himself.
17. "The student canteens are slightly cleaner. A dinner there costs 3 zl. on an average. The food is poorer. Instead of meat the students often get potatoes or porridge with a little oil which there is a little meat or cabbage. The total dinners served daily in the students' canteens is about 35,000.
18. "At both factory and student canteens the accepted base for price calculation is that the price of dinner is the actual price of the food. The wages of the personnel, premises, light, etc., are covered by the state; to what extent this rule is observed is difficult to say; patrons get less food than they pay for. Privately, the difference in food is stolen by the personnel.

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Clubs

19. "A special form of closed restaurant are the clubs of all sorts of 'elite' organizations, e.g. the Journalists' Club, the Technicians' Club, the Writers' Club. The prices at these clubs are not low; in general they correspond to the prices at restaurants but the clubs always have a good chef and offer first-class food. The clubs admit only members and their guests.

20. "In some of the more choice clubs there is gambling and card playing. Among such clubs are the clubs of the sporting organization, Gwardia. As generally known, all the sporting organizations of the UB bear the name of Gwardia. The Gwardia clubs are the most luxurious of their kind and keep open until the small hours. They admit only UB officers and high CP bosses. An example is the Gwardia Club in Wroclaw, on ul. Kosciuszko in the premises of the former German Savoy nightclub. In autumn 1951 the entire house was repaired, remodelled, redecorated and furnished with Persian carpets, expensive furniture, table silver and 'Axon' porcelain. The price of food at such clubs is generally the same as at 'open' restaurants. Spirits are much cheaper. One can buy foreign spirits and wines, French cognac and American whiskey at very moderate prices.

21. "The Polish UB officers rarely say their Soviet comrades to these clubs. They are afraid that the Soviets might inform on their gambling. Also the tastes of the older and younger do not agree: the Soviets consider quantity superior to quality - to them two bottles of simple vodka are always better than one bottle of French cognac - the Poles have retained European tastes.

FGR Canteens

22. "A chapter apart are the canteens at the villages. So far [early 1954] there are none on the kolkhozes. On the sovkhozes (FGR's) they have been organized, although not on all. Their total number is unknown 25X1 but their standard is very low. Officially they are supposed to feed all the workers on the FGR and their families. They serve three meals - breakfast, dinner and supper - at the comparatively low price of 9 zl. per day, the dinner costing 5 zl. and breakfast and supper 2 zl. each. The helpings at the FGR canteens are larger than at the town canteens, but the workers are still hungry and compelled to prepare some additional food at home. The daily ration of bread per worker at the FGR canteens is 500 grams, a quantity the peasant eats at breakfast alone.

Identity Checks

23. "There is no permanent check of identity of customers at restaurants and bars; it happens only when the UB are after a certain person and suspect that he has hidden in a restaurant or cafe. Even at the cafes where all sorts of specialists congregate, no day nobody interferes with the customers. However, it must be noted that the majority of the patrons at cafes in working time are UB agents.

24. "This does not mean that there is no vigilance whatsoever at public eating places. It is conducted mostly directly by the personnel. Many waiters work for the UB, so-called clandestine informants. The latter register all customers, especially if they come regularly. The waiters watch them. If anyone runs up a large bill at a restaurant, he may be quite sure that within the next few days he will be summoned to the UB to give an account of where he got so much money. Of course, this applies to ordinary citizens only, not to regime members.

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25. Home Meals

The bulk of the population naturally eats at home, including those comparatively few who try to eat at a restaurant once daily. What do they eat?

26. A distinction must be made between town and country. A worker in a town takes his breakfast with him to the factory: half a kilogram (one pound) of bread with lard (but often without anything) and a bottle of substitute coffee without sugar. Sugar costs 22 zl. per kilogram; workers' families buy it for the children only. A kg. of black (rye) bread costs 3 zl.; a slightly better quality bread costs 4 zl. A kg. of lard costs 40-50 zl., depending on availability. The family at home eat the same breakfast with the difference that the children get sugar in their coffee and jam (18 zl. per kg.) on their bread instead of lard.

27. Only the minimum quantity of fats appears in this diet. The workers can afford only three kinds of vegetables: potatoes at 0.80-1.80 zl. per kg. and onions at 2 zl. and cabbage at 0.80 zl. per kg. Salt costs 0.90 zl. per kg. Everything made from flour is prepared at home, e.g. spaghetti, pastry. The difference in price is enormous if a factory product is bought. 1 kg. of so-called 50 per cent flour costs 6 zl.; a kg. of spaghetti made from this flour costs 14-24 zl.

28. In the homes of the intelligentsia the quality of food is slightly better but the quantity smaller. They eat less bread, potatoes and cabbage. They have a small helping of chopped meat (force-meat) perhaps three times weekly. Occasionally they buy some canned fish (18-40 zl. per can) for supper and drink tea with sugar (one kg. of Caucasian tea costs 12 zl.). The intelligentsia also buy butter, honey and jam to eat with their bread and occasionally a bun (0.60 zl. per piece) for breakfast. While the workers smoke cigarettes of the sport brand (4.60 zl. for a packet of 20), the intelligentsia smoke cigarettes of the Mewa or Wzorcowe brands (5.60-6 zl. for a packet of 20).

Improved Supplies

29. On the whole it must be said that the supply situation has improved slightly in the last three months, owing to Feb 54%. This is mainly due to the price policy of the regime when rationing was abolished prices were raised steadily: the consumer can no longer afford better-quality food. Thereby the illusion is created that food is more plentiful than earlier, for the more expensive items (e.g. sausages) can actually be found in the shops practically every time. At the same time the regime makes great efforts to ensure at least the staple foods. There has been no shortage lately in bread, flour, etc.

30. The system works better in the larger towns where markets are neither so frequent nor large. In smaller (i.e. rural) towns they are still the rule. One reason is the smaller number of grocery and other food shops. "In the provinces, i.e. in the countryside there are 1 food shop per every thousand inhabitants; in central Poland there is 1 food shop for every 1800 inhabitants."

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Village Food Supplies

31. "In the villages the people eat perhaps better and certainly more than in towns. The peasants who move to the towns to work take a long time to get accustomed to the meagre diet of the townspersons. The villagers eat homebaked bread, home grown potatoes, and the pork and lard of their own pigs. Milk and eggs are also included in their diet. This was not so often the case before World War II when those commodities were mostly sold. Now it often does not pay to sell them since one cannot buy anything for the money. In the mornings the peasants eat bread and with it a milk soup, milk, eggs or lard. For dinner the most usual dish is cabbage with lard and potatoes. The peasants also often use vegetable oil of their own production.
32. "No peasant buys any cigarettes. They all grow their own tobacco. The same goes for vodka for there is a lot of illicit brewing in the villages."

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